

TO: Governor
FROM: John Arledge
DATE: March 10, 2004
SUBJECT: Message -- Next 60 days

We are reaching the point in this Legislative Session where we have a clearer picture of what the endgame might be and how we can shape it. Passing your legislative agenda is our most important goal, but shaping the public's perception of your legislative activity is just as important.

Our message progression since the Inauguration has been as follows: Executive appointments; "State of the State" address; Executive budget; Agenda highlights (Workforce Development, "Operation: Streamline", Teachers, Tort Reform); and Budget response/follow-up (House Budget debate).

Legislative Gameplan

Our message between now and the end of the Session should be predicated on what we want the end to look like -- in other words -- we should begin writing our own postscript. Judging by what we believe might pass right now, I believe for you to be

seen as having had a successful legislative session we need five things to happen:

1. Passage of Workforce Development Act;
2. Passage of half of “Operation: Streamline” (Medicaid, consolidations, etc.);
3. Passage of a Budget with significant Barbour features (no new taxes/fees, no change in revenue estimate, incorporated savings);
4. The allocation of some additional K-12 funding; and
5. No House attempt to pull tort reform out of committee.

Legislative Winners

While I certainly hope we have other successes, with these developments in place the history of this Session could be written with both you and McCoy as legislative winners. You would be seen as: passing a major job creation initiative from your campaign (workforce development); passing half of a serious savings plan which the administration can fulfill and get credit for later (“Operation: Streamline”); having more final budget involvement than recent governors (sustainable budget veto); and having at least no public record of fighting more K-12 funding.

McCoy would get credit for assuring more education funding, protecting the state health insurance plan, keeping

state employee Personnel Board protections, and killing tort reform.

There will be other issues that will garner short-term media attention (voter ID, campaign finance, gay marriage, county pay raises) but the media will focus on the Session's winners and losers, and we should continue to keep message discipline on the issues that ultimately reflect how the media will judge your first Session.

Message Actions

If we assume this endgame, there are several message steps we should take in the next two months:

1. Heavily publicize the signing and passage of the Workforce Development Act around the state;
2. Continue to point out our budget parameters (no taxes, no "funny money", etc.);
3. Heavily publicize any additional money found for K-12 – possibly in conjunction with the Senate;
4. Begin linking McCoy/Blackmon on tort reform as the bill gets closer to death; and
5. Consider making a late session veiled public reference to a possible tort reform special session.

Legislative Lobbying

We are currently matching key legislators with supporter lists and district research for any late Session lobbying efforts

that may be needed. Now that the Senate has passed our agenda, I think it would also be a good idea to enlist their help to begin both a public and private campaign against the House. Privately, we should ask our Senate friends to mobilize their constituents to lobby their respective representatives. Publicly, the Senate should begin putting media pressure on the House to pass important legislation – including an honest budget. Such dynamics would position you well.

We will soon begin scheduling interviews with smaller papers that reach key districts. We will also be thinking about another press tour late in the Session as there will probably be another contentious budget issue that we will have to explain.

Finally, we should examine ways to publicize your legislative outreach efforts. While we do not want to lessen the privacy or authenticity of your meetings with legislators, I believe the public likes to see a Governor working with the Legislature – and expects it from someone like you. We should look for a bill in the House that we think will pass anyway (ex: workforce development) and highlight for the media your personal lobbying with House members to get the bill passed.

